



Nuclear Free Local Authorities Steering Committee

information

For immediate release, 23rd November 2009

New nuclear build – major risks over cancers must be taken into account by the Energy and Health Ministers in decision-making

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities has written to the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change and the Secretary of State for Health to seek a delay in one of the crucial consultations on proposals to build up to ten new nuclear power stations in England and Wales.

At the same time as consultations are being carried out on the ten proposed sites for new nuclear power stations, the UK Government is also consulting on the “regulatory justification” of two new types of reactor. (1) The “Justification Process”, a legal requirement of the European Union, involves carrying out an assessment of the health detriments of radiation exposures caused by the proposed nuclear power stations in order to show they are outweighed by social and economic benefits.

At a seminar held in Glasgow at the end of October the Nuclear Free Local Authorities heard from radiation consultant, Dr Ian Fairlie, about the findings of a report by the German government on cancer rates around nuclear sites in Germany. The German KiKK study (Kinderkrebs in der Umgebung von Kernkraftwerken = Childhood Cancer in the Vicinity of Nuclear Power Plants) reported a 1.6-fold solid cancer risk and a 2.2-fold leukaemia risk, among infants under 5 years old living within 5 km of all German nuclear power stations.

The study’s main finding is that the increased risks of childhood leukaemia were **unequivocally linked to proximity to nuclear reactors**. This report has formally been accepted by the German Government. The study’s findings support over 60 other studies worldwide on increased childhood cancer near nuclear power stations.

The Justification consultation document (2) points out that the Government’s Committee on the Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment (COMARE) is currently undertaking a further review of the incidence of childhood cancer around nuclear power stations, with particular reference to the KiKK study and expects the outcome of this review to be available at the start of 2010.

Bailie George Regan, Chair of Nuclear Free Local Authorities, said:

“Clearly the German reports raise all sorts of questions about the uncertainties associated with protecting children and pregnant women from the health effects of radiation in the UK. It would be madness to plough on with the construction of new reactors before we are fully informed about their full implications. The health of our constituents matters before we take any reckless future decisions on nuclear power.”

The NFLA believe it is crucial that the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate is fully informed before making his decision on Justification. But it is also important that consultees, such as the Nuclear Free Local Authorities, are given the opportunity to be fully informed about the findings of the COMARE review before submitting comments on the Justification consultation. If the closing date for public comments on Justification remains as early as February 22nd next year, neither of these may be possible. Unfortunately Professor Elliot, COMARE chairman told a recent meeting in London that COMARE will not complete its deliberations until March 2010 (3).

The Nuclear Free Local Authorities have therefore requested that the deadline for comments on the Justification Consultation is postponed until after the publication of the COMARE review of KiKK. The NFLA believe the KiKK study is so important to be considered in the UK that no new nuclear

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build should be considered until the health effects of existing nuclear sites are fully understood. Our communities would expect nothing less.

Ends

(1) The consultation documents on Justification are available at the following website:
http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/consultations/reg_just_cons/reg_just_cons.aspx

(2) Volume 2 Para 3.123

(3) During a meeting of the National Dose Assessment Working Group on 17th November 2009.

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